

Moving the Needle

NO. 2 •

ASSISTANCE UNIT (AU) LAUNCHES A NEW WEBPAGE

Learn more about the AU

TOURISM-UP

AU launches hospitality-focused
tourism project in the South.

HANDICRAFTS SECTOR

The United States is now the
leading destination for
Tunisian handicrafts



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The U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit (AU) provides programming that responds to the needs of the Government of Tunisia to accelerate economic development and strengthen its' democracy. The AU works in coordination with other U.S. government agencies as well as the international community to target distinct and defined elements of Tunisian economic and governance reforms. The AU manages projects funded through Economic Support Bilateral Funds, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) local grants, and three MEPI leadership programs.



U.S. Embassy, Tunis

ANNOUNCEMENTS



The Assistance Unit (AU) is pleased to announce the launch of its webpage on the U.S. Embassy Tunis website. You can now access all information relevant to the AU, including programming priorities, success stories, factsheets, and announcements.

The Embassy's AU supports programming developed in coordination with the Government of Tunisia and the Tunisian people to accelerate economic development and strengthen democratic institutions. You can visit the webpage by clicking on the following link: <https://bit.ly/3wzC3D4>



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS

THE U.S. SUPPORTS THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN TUNISIA BY MODERNIZING THE AGRICULTURAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM

U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the Acting Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, Mohamed Fadhel Kraiem and the Director of the Agricultural Extension and Training Agency (AVFA), Khemaies Zayani, at a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Vocational Agricultural Training Center of Takelsa, on June 24. The event inaugurated new U.S. funded equipment for the center and launched the new FARMER to FARMER online platform, the first e-learning platform in Tunisia to connect farmers to AVFA. At the event, AVFA signed agreements with private companies in the region to help young farmers get jobs. The U.S. Embassy's \$5M FARMER project supports the development of the Tunisian agriculture sector, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, through technical assistance to AVFA and through the modernization of five training centers in Takelsa, Chott Mariem, Hakim Sud, Tabarka, and Sbeitla.



"THE TAKELSA CENTER IS AN IMPRESSIVE EXAMPLE OF FARMERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES WORKING TOGETHER TO EXPAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN CAP BON. THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR EMPLOYS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF TUNISIANS AND DRIVES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AND UNDERSERVED AREAS OF THE COUNTRY."
AMBASSADOR BLOME



***"Our assistance programs currently support more than 2,000 agro-businesses and agriculture cooperatives throughout the country. These efforts have increased revenues by about \$150 million and created more than 8,000 new jobs since 2018."
Ambassador Donald Blome***



Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Health to Support Governance in the Health Sector

U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the Minister of Health Faouzi Mehdi on March 29 for the launch of the \$5 million SAHA project. In partnership with CIPE, the SAHA project supports the Ministry's efforts to improve the management of public hospitals, strengthen the pharmaceutical supply chain and provide training opportunities to Tunisian health professionals across the country.

This Tunisia-U.S. partnership exemplifies our joint response to the pandemic; over the last year, the U.S. government has provided more than \$36 million in COVID support, which illustrates our commitment to long-term investments in Tunisia's health sector. The event also highlighted the Embassy's partnership with Les Grandes Ecoles de la Communication to ensure good governance in the health sector and to counter fake news during the pandemic.



***“As the single largest donor to COVAX, we are demonstrating our commitment to ensuring equitable vaccine access across the world.”
Ambassador Donald Blome***



U.S. Embassy Supports Handicrafts Sector in Tunisia

U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the Director General of ONAT, Faouzi Ben Halima, and the ACEA team on April 8 for the first virtual craft fair in Tunisia which gave talented and innovative artisans from across Tunisia access to international buyers through the CraftExports online platform. This event is part of the U.S. Embassy's 15.6 million TND investment in Tunisia's handicraft sector through the Collaborative Action for Handicrafts Export (ACEA) project, which is helping artisans, particularly rural women, reach a wider market both domestically and internationally. Due in large part to this project, the United States is now the leading destination for Tunisian handicrafts, with exports totaling more than 25.8 million TND in 2020.

"The Embassy is working hand in hand with more than 13,000 small and medium size enterprises, providing direct grants to help them survive the pandemic's impacts."




U.S. Embassy Tunis

U.S. AMBASSADOR DONALD BLOME ATTENDED THE U.S. EMBASSY-FUNDED “DEMOCRACY AWAKENING TOOLKIT” CEREMONY



On March 1, U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the Minister of Education, Fethi Sellaouti, the President of the Independent High Authority for Elections, Nabil Baffoun, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Nicolas Kaczorowski, during a ceremony to celebrate the “Democracy Awakening Toolkit” that IFES produced as part of the U.S. Embassy-funded project.

The toolkit was produced and distributed throughout primary, preparatory, and secondary schools in Tunisia, reaching more than 100,000 students. The kit represents a transformative educational method promoting democratic values and participatory citizenship among Tunisia’s youth. Through more than \$5 million in U.S. Embassy support since 2018, IFES has been able to support the ISIE and the Court of Accounts to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections in 2019, in addition to enhancing voter education and voter outreach.



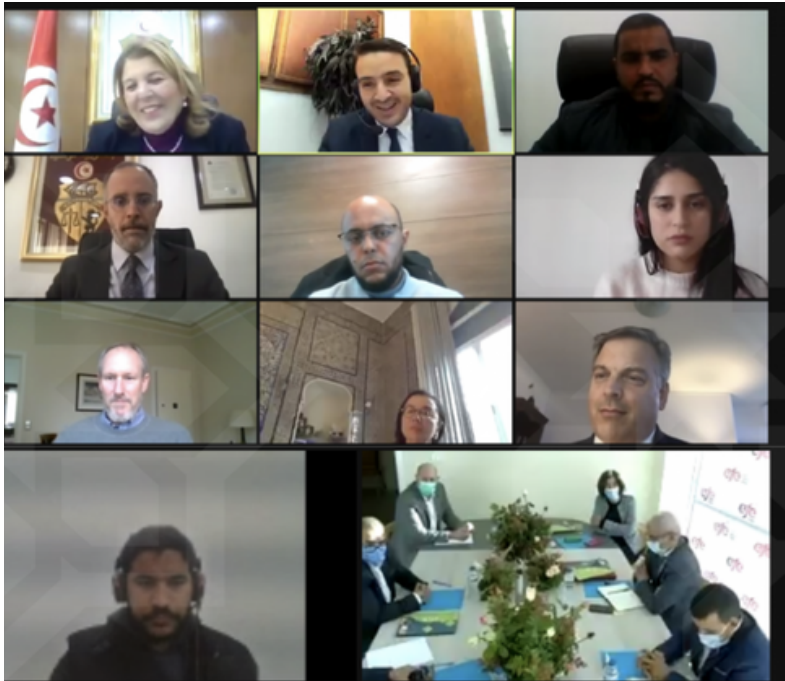
“We celebrate the nexus between education, participatory citizenship and democracy and reaffirm our continuous support for free, fair, and transparent elections that the Tunisian public can have confidence in.” - Ambassador Donald Blome



U.S. Embassy Tunis

EVENTS

U.S. EMBASSY SUPPORTS NEW YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY OFFICE IN ZARZIS



**Inauguration
Centre EFE-Tunisie
à Zarzis**

Jeudi 07 janvier à 15h00

**إفتتاح مكتب
منظمة التعليم من أجل التوظيف
في الجنوب**

U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome joined the Minister of Industry, Energy, and Mines Salwa Sghayer in inaugurating Education for Employment (EFE)'s new office in Zarzis, which will help graduates from throughout the south launch their careers.

As part of the ceremony, EFE signed new partnership agreements with key private sector and employment stakeholders including the Zarzis Park of Economic Activities, the South Development Office, and the Higher Institute of Technological Studies of Djerba.

"I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT THROUGH MORE THAN \$2.8 MILLION IN U.S. EMBASSY SUPPORT SINCE 2017, EFE HAS BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE TARGETED SKILL-BASED TRAINING THAT HAS HELPED MORE THAN 500 YOUTH FROM INTERIOR REGIONS FIND JOBS IN A RANGE OF INDUSTRIES." - AMBASSADOR BLOME



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NEWS IN BRIEF



FRESH TUNISIA RECOGNIZES YOUNG GRADUATES FROM THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

The U.S.-funded Fresh Tunisia project held a graduation ceremony on February 26 to celebrate a group of young entrepreneurs who successfully completed Fresh Tunisia's entrepreneurship and business development training program. This ceremony was an opportunity to pay special tribute to the young graduates for their strong commitment to starting their own businesses. The U.S. Embassy supports the Tunisian people in their efforts to strengthen the business climate, foster innovation, and create jobs.



U.S. EMBASSY PROMOTES ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

In support of Tunisian efforts to promote accountability and transparency, the Court of Accounts convened on June 30 a workshop on good governance in the public sector, as part of the U.S. Embassy-funded Anti-Corruption Program and in partnership with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The stakeholders discussed the achievements of 10 years of reforms in fighting corruption, including the improved governance of public funds, improved coordination between institutional actors, increased digitization, and a revised legal framework. Since 2017, the U.S. Embassy has invested almost \$6 million in NCSC's accountability project, which strengthens government institutions' capacities to fight corruption.



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NEWS IN BRIEF



TRUST NEWS TUNISIA PLATFORM HELPS TUNISIANS FIGHT FAKE NEWS

The U.S. funded Trust News Tunisia online platform monitors news on social media, assesses its accuracy and converts fake news to fact-based news, with a particular focus on COVID-19. Since its launch eight months ago, the platform has checked, verified, and corrected more than 1355 news posts. The U.S. Embassy is committed to helping Tunisians fight misinformation and its dangerous consequences. We invite you to check their website, where you can be sure you receive accurate and transparent news. <https://trustnews.tn/>



"IMPACT FINANCE" CREATES AN INVESTMENT GROUP TO CATALYZE CAPITAL FUNDS

The Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC), newly-launched business incubator Redstart Tunisia, and Damya – a network of female angel investors, signed an agreement to create an investment group to catalyze capital funds for high-growth small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the interior regions of Tunisia. Under the agreement, FSVC will provide technical and operational support to help structure the investment group, recruit prospective investors, and build the group's investment capacities.



TAPP LAUNCHES THE FIRST ONLINE PLATFORM TO LINK MUNICIPALITIES, DEPUTIES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

On January 27, the Tunisian Accountability and Political Participation (TAPP) project successfully launched the first online platform designed to enhance communication between municipal councils, deputies, and civil society. With support from the U.S. Embassy's Assistance Unit, the "Eselni" digital platform has created a participatory space where citizens can debate, advocate, and voice concerns about issues impacting their regions and communities. The project, which particularly targets youth, women, and people with disabilities, was implemented in the governorates of Nabeul, Sfax, Zaghouan, and Kairouan.

NEWS IN BRIEF



U.S. EMBASSY IS PROUD TO SUPPORT TUNISIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Tunisian startup Dabchy and its co-founder Ameni Mansouri were chosen among the 10 selected startups in the first ever Google for Startups Accelerator in the MENA region. Dabchy.com is a peer-to-peer fashion marketplace where users can buy and sell new and used clothing items. Dabchy was also one of three Tunisian startups to successfully complete the Endeavor Tunisia Scale Up Program as part of the Assistant Unit's Promise Tunisia project. We are proud to support young talented Tunisian entrepreneurs!

"PROMISE" PARTNERS WITH U. S. - BASED COMPANY TO TRAIN ENTREPRENEURS ON PATENTING

As part of its intellectual property (IP) support for start-ups, the U.S. funded Promise project partnered with Montgomery Mcracken, a U. S.-Based IP firm, to deliver training on patenting in the United States.



The training focused on patenting processes, practices, and regulations in the U.S. market. Tunisian start-ups ENOVA Robotics, Majesteye, Moove, Lifeeye, and Qualifour, operating in the fields of artificial intelligence, robotics, education technology, and health technology, sought advice looking to patent their innovations. This activity, organized in collaboration with Smart Capital and the Ministry of Technology Communication and Digital Transformation, aims to equip Tunisian start-ups with the tools needed to apply for international patents.



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NEWS IN BRIEF



"PROMISE" HELPS TUNISIAN ENTREPRENEURS REACH INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Promise project organized on June 29 a special panel targeting young entrepreneurs looking to expand their start-ups to the U.S. market. In the panel, business experts discussed developing bridges between the Tunisian and American innovation ecosystems. The U.S. Embassy supports young Tunisian entrepreneurs to reach international markets and contribute to the economic growth of Tunisia. To watch the live panel, please visit: <https://bit.ly/2VIOpSb>

ASSISTANCE UNIT LAUNCHES THE TOURISM UP PROJECT TO SUPPORT GUEST HOUSES AND HOTELS IN THE SOUTH

On June 29, the Association for Media and Youth (AMAJ) held a press conference in Tozeur to launch the U.S. Embassy-funded Tourism-Up project. The U.S. Embassy helps Tunisia promote and preserve its cultural heritage by supporting the tourism sector in the south. The \$350,000 project helps eight hotels and guest houses in the governorates of Tozeur and Kebili attract more international clientele by training more than 200 professionals to improve their customer service. The U.S. Embassy works closely with civil society and the Tunisian government through various programs to protect Tunisia's rich heritage and strengthen the tourism sector.





U.S. Embassy Tunis

FEATURES



YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR DESIGNS SMART DRONES TO FERTILIZE PALM TREES

Maysa Karchoud, a 24-year-old mechanical engineering student and a beneficiary of the Assistance Unit-funded Student4Change project, founded the DRO-BEE project, which designs smart drones to pollinate palm trees in the south.

The drones' system is composed of two parts; a control to detect palm stamens, and a spray that contains a reservoir and a robotic arm, ensuring precision and adaptability during fertilization. A pilot flies the drones with a remote control and a wireless camera. DRO-BEE represents a transformative, eco-friendly, and cost reducing method to fertilize palm trees and to provide the necessary nutrients during the growing seasons. It produces a greater fertilization rate, which generates higher date production and increased sales.

As a Student4Change laureate, Karchoud received a grant of \$2,500 and mentoring to help her launch her project. The U.S. Embassy helps and empowers young women entrepreneurs to actively contribute to the economic growth of Tunisia.



U.S. Embassy Tunis

FEATURES

FinTech Catalyst: Finance meets technological innovation

The MEPI-funded FinTech Catalyst project helps Tunisian startups address the financial technology (fintech) needs of local corporations through targeted training, mentoring and coaching. Implemented by the Small Enterprise Assistance Funds (SEAF), in partnership with CEED Tunisia, the project works with Tunisian corporate partners to identify their fintech needs and then selects Tunisian startups with the potential to address those needs.

Thus far, four selected startups have created 11 innovative fintech solutions, which have been purchased by the project's local corporate partners for over \$60,000. The four startups have created 28 new jobs and retained their corporate partners as established clients, ensuring a sustainable revenue stream.

In addition to helping startups establish local partnerships and expand their local clientele base, the FinTech Catalyst project has supported the creation of partnerships with U.S. software companies, including Amazon Web Services, IBM, and Microsoft. The U.S. partners have provided generous financial contributions and mentorship to ensure the development of the Tunisian startups. Amazon Web Services offered \$11,500 in free cloud services to each participating startup.





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FEATURES

SOLIXY, GABES

Solixy is a start-up that develops innovative financial solutions based on artificial intelligence for the retail sector. Solixy applied for the project's competition with Assurances Maghreb, a Tunisian insurance company, to design an innovative chatbot. FinTech Catalyst gave Solixy technical assistance to improve their business model, commercial strategy and pitching techniques, which helped them better support their corporate partner. During the working sessions with Assurances Maghreb, Solixy developed an effective pricing strategy to attract and retain new customers. This ultimately enabled Solixy to sell its fintech solutions to Assurance Maghreb. Additionally, Solixy secured four additional purchase orders for their chatbot solution.



DQLICK, TUNUS

Dqlick specializes in digital transformation in the insurance industry. One of the main products offered by the start-up is a platform that brings together clients, insurers, brokers, and healthcare professionals. Dqlick's team increased its understanding of corporate partners' needs through the co-creation sessions and identified ways to improve its product through coaching and mentoring sessions. With the support of the project, Dqlick signed a partnership agreement with an insurance company in Mali, recruited a new business development officer, and raised funds from SAVE - a Tunisian mechanism that provides funding to Tunisian start-ups to help navigate the Covid-19 crisis.





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FEATURES

DEEPERA, TUNUS

Deepera provides fintech solutions based on artificial intelligence. Deepera signed purchase contracts with Attijari and Amen Banks for its conversational service agent, which combines artificial intelligence with human speech. These deals helped Deepera cover its short-term costs and benefit from additional financing to accelerate the development of its other projects. In addition, CEED Tunisia connected Deepera with a pioneer software company in Morocco that is considering investing up to \$100,000 in innovative startups.

MEPI

CEED TUNISIA

Fintech Catalyst

Faouzi Moussa

START'UP: DEEPERA

ATILA TELCO, TUNIS

AtilaTelco was created in 2017 and originally operated solely within the banking sector. Through the MEPI Fintech Catalyst project, the start-up expanded its customer portfolio and penetrated the telecommunication market by obtaining a purchase order from Tunisie Telecom to create a digital solution to analyze customer data to better predict future behavior.

MEPI

CEED TUNISIA

Fintech Catalyst

Marwen Dhmaied

START'UP: ATILA TELCO

“SAWA” CREATES A NETWORK OF LAWYERS TO PROVIDE PRO-BONO LEGAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE



Acknowledging the rising numbers of gender-based violence (GBV) in Tunisia and the pressing need to have competent and well-trained lawyers assisting victims, the Assistance Unit-funded Safety and Women Advancement (SAWA) project developed a network of lawyers to provide rapid, low-cost legal assistance to women.

The American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative provided extensive and targeted trainings to a group of lawyers on the application of Tunisian anti-GBV law, protection measures for victims, and filing protective orders. The trainings enabled the lawyers to work actively and directly with women's centers and shelters throughout Tunisia, in exchange for a small honorarium covered by the SAWA project.

During the pandemic, the number of victims seeking legal support through the violence against women (VAW) hotline increased drastically, making the legal-aid network an integral and effective component of supporting GBV victims. The legal aid network's lawyers have not only been able to respond to an increasing number of cases and legal assistance requests, but they also raised awareness about GBV in their respective communities such through trainings and promoting online resources targeting local government and civil society representatives as well as victims.

FSVC SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM SUPPORTS SMALL TUNISIAN BUSINESSES

In September 2020, the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC), in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce (CoC) of Beja, Gabes and Gafsa, selected 30 businesses to benefit from a U.S. Embassy funded small grants program. The program helps businesses to improve sales and recover from losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recipients include:



"I am very satisfied by the support provided by the Beja Chamber of Commerce. This is a great service that should be expanded throughout the region." - Marwa Saadi, Manager at Le Petit Pilote.

Le Petit Pilote:

Marwa Saadi, the owner and manager of Le Petit Pilote nursery school, used the grant to develop a customer relationship management tool to better track interactions with existing and potential customers. In addition, she implemented a new marketing strategy that highlights the school's pedagogy and learning competencies on social media. These improvements caused enrollment to double from 25 to 50 in a period of two months. Le Petit Pilote had to urgently increase its operating capacity by recruiting four additional employees from the region to address this increased demand



U.S. Embassy Tunis

FEATURES



"I could not thank you enough for this initiative that is particularly opportune in crisis time", Fadhel Abidi, UFC Manager.

United Food Company:

United Food Company (UFC), a wholesale pastry firm, used the grant to improve its capacities and change the ingredients of its products to extend their expiration dates by an additional month. UFC also used the grant to enhance its staff's sales and marketing capacities and skills.

Consequently, UFC doubled its sales volume from 7,200 to 14,400 units per week, reduced its production cost by 5%, and successfully expanded its distribution network to other regions including Greater Tunis and the Governorate of Bizerte.



"Thanks to the SGP initiative, we succeeded to meet the specific needs of our French clients and we received promising feedback to continue future collaboration." Mr. Kilani Ben Abdallah, CEO of Nour Oasis.

Nour Oasis:

"Nour Oasis" was founded in 2011 in Kebili. The business specializes in the export of dates and date-based products. Nour Oasis benefited from SGP-funded expertise to design 250 gram boxes to appeal to its French clientele, who prefer these boutique boxes to the one-kilogram boxes that were previously used by the company. Nour Oasis took advantage of the SGP to modernize its packaging design, ensuring that it reflects the organic nature of the dates.



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